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MARCH 11, 2022 | VOLUME 13 | ISSUE 6

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26th Annual Exhibition of Art by  
Michigan Prisoners back in person.  
**Page 7**



LA SHAWN  
COURTWRIGHT,  
#56

ASK YOUR  
VENDOR:  
**WHAT'S YOUR  
GOOD LUCK  
CHARM?**  
PAGE 3

# GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Have you seen the FedUp food truck?  
Food for the body, mind and spirit. **Page 4**



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in this **ISSUE**



**ICE FISHING: NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S SPORT**  
Ethan Hall, page 6

**IS FAMILY SHELTERING FAILING WASHTENAW COUNTY?**  
Washtenaw Camp Outreach, page 4

**A CALL FOR LGBTQ PRIORITIZATION IN US POLICY**  
Sean Errinwright, page 8

**BALLIN' on a BUDGET: DELICIOUS PASTA SITUATION**  
page 12

Street papers stand with the innocent people affected by the conflict in Ukraine.



International Network of Street Papers

As Russia invades Ukraine, it's anticipated that more than a million people may flee the country to seek refuge in neighbouring nations like Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. Street papers in those places respond to the ongoing conflict, standing in solidarity with the Ukrainian people's right to democracy and in support of all those who may flee. Read more at [www.groundcovernews.org/archive/blog-posts](http://www.groundcovernews.org/archive/blog-posts)

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

CREATING **OPPORTUNITY** AND A **VOICE** FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHILE TAKING ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed. Vendors purchase each biweekly copy of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale. Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. We are proudly a member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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ASK YOUR VENDOR

**What's your good luck charm?**  
**Everytime I get a \$2 bill, I don't spend it. I keep it for good luck.**  
— Gary Levertt, #544

**I don't need luck!**  
— Joe Woods, #103

**I'm my own lucky charm.**  
— Jay Gordon, #533

**I don't believe in that. It's superstitious.**  
— Pony Bush, #305

**My locket. I always wear it and use it as a pendulum to make decisions.**  
— Ken Parks, #490

**My necklace that contains some of my Dad's ashes. I always keep him close.**  
— Megan Rose, #558

**Love is the only luck I need.**  
— Larzell Washington, #128

**Faith.**  
— La Shaw Courtwright, #56



Spring Equinox

As the days get longer in the northern hemisphere, we will arrive at the moment when day and night are the same length of time. It's called a vernal equinox and happens twice a year. The sun is directly above the equator. March 20 will be the vernal equinox that is called spring in the northern hemisphere and fall in the southern hemisphere. It is the tilt of the earth that brings us the seasons. Every change of seasons is a community celebration as we recognize the vastness of the commons we share. Common sense has become even more precious due to its scarcity under the onslaught of commodity fetish culture and the drive to extract profit until the last resources are exhausted. The target now is your data, time and attention. The complexity of this is compounded by the puzzle of appearances so that common sense can easily become a fiction of the prevailing cognitive bias. If only common sense and scientific method became commonly understood. Can our observations be studied with some consensus around a hypothesis that we can test experimentally? Our life is an experiment and our challenge is to come up with a working hypothesis and put it to the test. The struggle is to experience our own consciousness, mindfulness, awareness and concentrate them into a completeness that will be fresh in this moment, and find reality to be a workable situation. That is my



**KEN PARKS**  
Groundcover vendor No. 490

hypothesis, our hypothesis if it is reasonable, and I believe we can work it out. As the earth's resources are wasted, your attention will be directed to the colonization of the universe. We now have the best telescope in the known world in orbit around the sun of our solar system. The corporate ruling class view themselves as masters of space so the moon, Mars and the Big Bang will be exploited on their terms and conditions. You may qualify for a one-way ticket to Mars. There are rumors of a waiting line. I think we will discover it is better to be here now than on a one-way rocket later. We have more choices if we choose to love ourselves as a community of sentient beings, starting with this earth. I highly recommend the article about the Community Farm of Ann Arbor in the current issue of Crazy Wisdom Community Journal. The revolution of living soil is alive. When we fully live with land sovereignty awareness, all sentient beings will be our

community. We can talk about reparations and unceded land, towards a reconciliation that benefits all beings without exception. Ecovillages will welcome you everywhere. Where Do We Go From Here? Martin Luther King wrote a book with that title. He was spiritual friends with Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk who was a master of inner peace, learning to be fully present in this moment. Their respect was so deep that King nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. They were both controversial in the media at that time and no Peace Prize was awarded that year. You can go into communion with them when you are ready. Thich Nhat Hanh died in January this year at the age of 95. His funeral was widely viewed and moved a world audience to experience some moments of inner peace. His teaching and experience continue at plumvillage.org. As is taught, "When the student is ready the teacher will appear." The spring equinox is another opportunity to celebrate the commons and experience what we share more deeply. We share the air and can practice breathing communion by placing our attention on the breath and resting at ease in the natural state of contentment. It may take some patience and be short-lived because we are not familiar with it as a way of life. It takes practice and every little bit counts.

Are there Black Republicans anymore?

During the month of February, Black History month, at least one news publication focused on emerging Black Republicans around the United States. Newsweek magazine featured on its cover several Black Americans who are running for election on the Republican ticket. Despite the reluctance of mainstream media outlets to accept that Black Republicans exist, recent evidence can no longer be ignored. The magazine article detailed that Black loyalty to the Democratic Party is dwindling. While it is evident in many states, including the southern states of Kentucky and North Carolina, closer to home in Michigan there are two Black notable Republican candidates. Former Detroit police chief James Craig announced that he would run for the Governor's seat in order to defeat current Governor Gretchen



**LIT KURTZ**  
Groundcover vendor No. 159

Whitmer. Despite protests from angry Black protestors in the city of Detroit, he remains undaunted. He told Newsweek that he has 'authenticity with Black audiences,' both from being a native of the city and from serving as police chief in the City of Detroit. Similarly, John James, who only lost by a 1.7% margin in his bid to be the U.S. Senator representing Michigan in the past election, is confident that he

will win his race for the U.S. House of Representatives as a Black Republican in the 2022 election. Regardless of the election results, it is clear that being a Black Republican is less of an anomaly as it advances towards being the norm. The Newsweek article predicts that the 2022 elections "... could go down as the moment elected Black Republicans go from a rarity to a real contingent." The Democrats' long-held claim on diversity is being challenged by these Black Republican candidates and it calls into question what one Black Republican House member refers to as a Democratic "monopoly on Black folks." Once considered the party of white men, the GOP, according to an anonymous Republican white official quoted in Newsweek, "can't be the party of white men anymore." Given that insight, the new diversity of the

Grand Old Party as it relates to race may be the biggest and newest challenge to Democrats at the 2022 polls.



**Former Detroit police chief James Craig announced that he would run for the Governor's seat as a Republican in order to defeat current Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Photo credit: David Guralnick.**



# Is family sheltering failing Washtenaw County?

## WASHTENAW CAMP OUTREACH

Anna\* began experiencing homelessness in January 2018. After nearly two years of sleeping outside, while working and trying to survive on the street with PTSD, in December 2019 she became pregnant and was moved up to the fourth floor at the Delonis Shelter — a higher-priority, more secure bed space. That stability only lasted until March 2020, the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. “I was kicked out, pregnant, with nothing but the hope I would be eligible for Rapid-Rehousing,” she said.

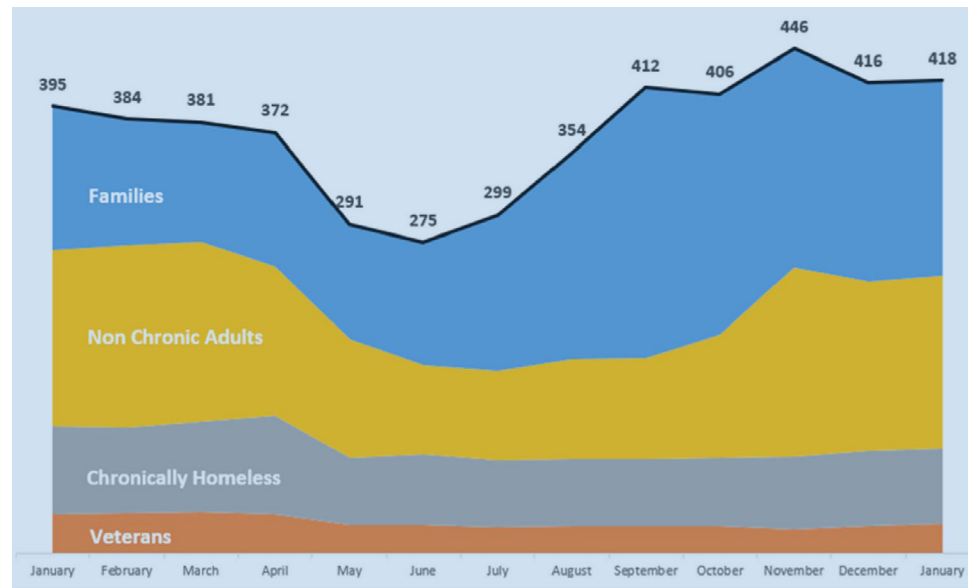
Anna then moved in with her child's grandmother, which disqualified her from the ‘homeless’ status, and consequently from her eligibility to receive high priority housing assistance. As soon as the eviction moratorium was lifted in 2021, she and her daughter were evicted from the grandmother's because of a Section 8 stipulation that restricts ‘doubling up’ in Housing Choice Voucher units.

In the summer of 2021, shelter provider Staples Family Center greatly reduced their capacity due to unknown reasons that were not shared with the community, devoting space at the center to veterans instead. In an August Groundcover article covering the Staples Family Center's bed reduction, Marla Conklin, director of social services at the Salvation Army, claimed that family sheltering needs would be covered “through eviction diversion and the use of hotel vouchers.”

Eight months later and in the depths of winter, it is apparent that family homelessness is rising (see right graphic) and that families continue to fall through critical gaps in the social services safety net.

We visited the Staples Family Center after trying to reach out on their phone and checking their website. Nothing public-facing indicates the change in services that occurred in August. They were not able to be contacted for an interview.

Nearly all housing services in



**Overview of people experiencing homelessness in Washtenaw County from January 2021- January 2022. Graph obtained through the Continuum of Care.**

Washtenaw County are accessed through a single hotline: (734) 961-1999, answered by Housing Access of Washtenaw County, or HAWC. HAWC is a centralized housing intake for individuals and families who are experiencing

homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Centralization is key for nuanced human service needs that are relieved

see **FAMILY** page 10 ➡

# Have you seen the FedUp food truck? Food for the body, mind and spirit

FedUp — a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southeast Michigan Synod, in partnership with Zion Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor — serves the local area by providing nutritious food-truck meals and by nourishing the “body, mind and spirit” of the community. Such local warming centers, churches, and community gathering spots as Liberty Plaza, Delonis rotating shelter, Grace Fellowship, House of Solutions’ parking lot, Zion’s God and Grub Ministry, Ypsilanti’s Sugarbrook Village, Peace House, Pull Over Prevention and Mutual Aid Clinics, Samaritas Affordable Living, Hope Clinic and more host FedUp in providing delicious meals that also feed the need for belonging and coming together.

FedUp predominantly caters to people experiencing homelessness, poverty and food insecurity. Pastor Anna, Executive Director of FedUp, has commented that there is a hierarchy of needs and as a church initiative, FedUp is focused on the spiritual needs of people. But they recognize they can’t offer hope to people who don’t know where their next meal is coming from. So, they conclude, they can’t nourish the spirit without nourishing the mind and body.

The organization lives out its values of people, service, dignity and quality.



**JOSIE GRAHAM**  
Intern

Master of Social Work intern Dara Bellinson said, “The two values I want to highlight are people and quality. We say people rather than community because we understand each person we serve has individual needs; however, community is also very important to us ... The food we serve is whole and nutritious. Our goal is to be 75% locally sourced by 2025.” So far, FedUp partners with three local gardens. FedUp takes into account allergies and food preferences, supplying vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options.

FedUp goes beyond its food-truck services by providing gathering spaces that bring people together to advocate for systemic change. “There are a number of



**Top left: Help of all ages is welcome at FedUp Ministries! Top right: Pastor Anna and Melvin Parson at We the People Opportunity Farm. Their goal is to be 75% locally sourced by 2025. Bottom right, cover: Preparation work for a FedUp food truck event at Zion Lutheran Church, where FedUp is based. Bottom left: FedUp team at Ypsi Peace House's birthday celebration.**



## Work. (L)earn. Thrive. Invest in your Future.

SummerWorks is a 10-week summer employment and mentorship program for young adults in Washtenaw County (ages 16-24). The program provides training and resources to help you:

- Network with local professionals
- Explore career opportunities and new industries
- Build essential job and leadership skills



## What are you signing up for?

- Attending 12 paid professional development sessions throughout the summer designed to help you build skills in resume writing, interviewing, communication, and much more
- Developing mentoring and supportive relationships with SummerWorks staff and employers
- The opportunity to intern for 10 weeks at a minimum of 20 hours per week from June 13th - August 19th

## Key Dates:

3/13 | Applications Due  
4/11 or 4/13 | Orientation  
5/9 | Interview Week  
6/13 | Internships Begin  
6/13 | Mentorship Begins  
7/13 | Mid-Summer Event  
8/18 | End-of-Summer Celebration  
8/19 | End of Program

## Professional Development Sessions

4/19 or 4/21 | PD I  
4/26 or 4/28 | PD II  
5/03 or 5/05 | PD III  
5/17 or 5/19 | PD IV



For more information, including how to apply:



**SummerWorks.info**



**mail@summerworks.info**

## ➡ FEDUP from previous page

community members on the board of directors. FedUp people show up when the community is hosting events, and listen and support in whatever ways they can,” according to Pastor Anna.

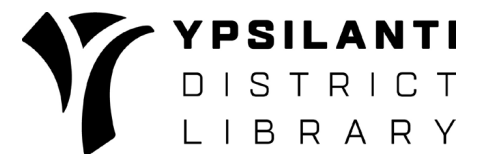
FedUp provides meals at community events, listens to community panels, and collects feedback from regulars. Over the past year, FedUp has served more than 4,000 meals with the help of its 20 partners, and continues to feed the unhoused community and partner organizations at

least six times a week. In the future, FedUp plans to hire people directly from the community they serve to work in the kitchen; expand its partnerships to include more businesses and civic organizations that align with its mission; and secure laundry and shower trucks.

Consider donating to FedUp to support the team in achieving these goals and, most importantly, expanding their reach to those in need of these necessary, life-sustaining services and resources. Other options to support FedUp include signing up for its

newsletter, booking the food truck, having FedUp cater an event, becoming a financial partner, volunteering and/or praying with and for FedUp.

Anyone, no proof of requirements necessary, can pick up a meal from FedUp. FedUp's Google Calendar, on its official website, contains information on FedUp events. If community members face urgent need, and FedUp is not hosting events in their area, they can contact FedUp on fed-upministries.org's contact form, located on its homepage, to be connected with resources.



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## FEATURED RESOURCE

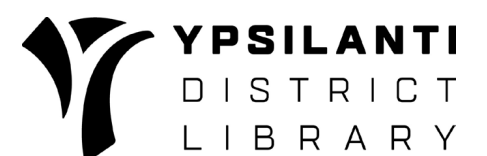
### KN-95 masks and test kits!

Thanks to the Washtenaw County Health Department, we've got KN-95 masks and COVID-19 tests available at all YDL locations. Ask at our circulation desks or call 734-482-4110 to learn more.

## FEATURED EVENT

**Black Voices of Dignity -- Educational Exhibit**  
On display at YDL-Michigan during regular hours

**This exhibit (running thru Apr 30) is a glimpse into the African-American experience. The images tell compelling stories of the struggles, strengths, triumphs, and hopes of an oppressed people.**





## Ice fishing: not your grandfather's sport

As someone who grew up ice fishing, I've grown accustomed to being met with laughter and puzzled faces when I tell them that ice fishing can be exciting. They'll say: "You freeze your butt off and twitch a lure in a tiny hole for hours and call that fun?" The answer is more complicated than that.

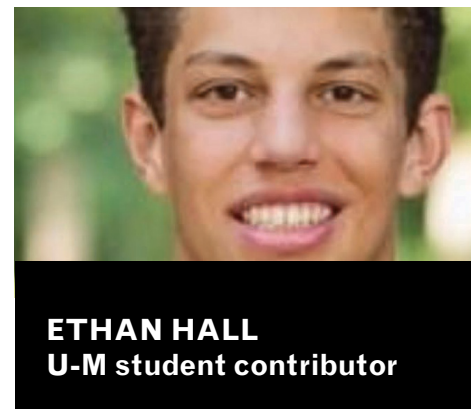
For a self-proclaimed "die-hard" like me, I would say yes. But, having had a great deal of experience bringing my less outdoor-oriented friends and people with small attention spans on the hardwater, I've seen that there are ways to promote everyone having a good time. Technological advancements combined with a better understanding of fish behavior have turned the sport from a guessing game characterized by inactivity into an exciting, fulfilling activity.

Companies like Garmin now make fish finders that use sonar technology to monitor fish activity and translate it to a screen that the angler can watch. So unless you're being guided by an old-timer who knows all the best spots, modern ice fishing can be equated to a real-life video game on a sonar screen where a victory leads to triumph over mother nature and an Instagram-worthy creature pulled through the hole. Before these advances, it was a complete mystery as to what could be swimming below. This led to much intrigue, but also hours of wasted time fishing what we can now recognize as unproductive spots.

My fondest memory on the ice came at an early age. My father and I were camping on a small lake in the Upper Peninsula catching hand-sized bluegills and sunfish as fast as we could drop our lines in the water. We were about to catch our daily limit when I set the hook on another small fish. As I was coaxing it in, the rod jerked out of my hands, and when I went to pick it up, it felt like a sea monster had latched on. After about a ten-minute tug-of-war, my dad grabbed ahold of a Master Angler (38 in.) Northern Pike. I cherish memories like those with my father over almost anything, and that child-like bliss that comes with catching a fish never seems to fade away.

Ice fishing at its simplest looks something like this: You grab some of your hardiest friends, pack up your vehicle with ice rods, lures and snacks, get your shack to shelter you from the elements, and bring an ice auger to drill holes for fishing through the ice.

From the comfort of a shack with a warm heater, anglers can take their



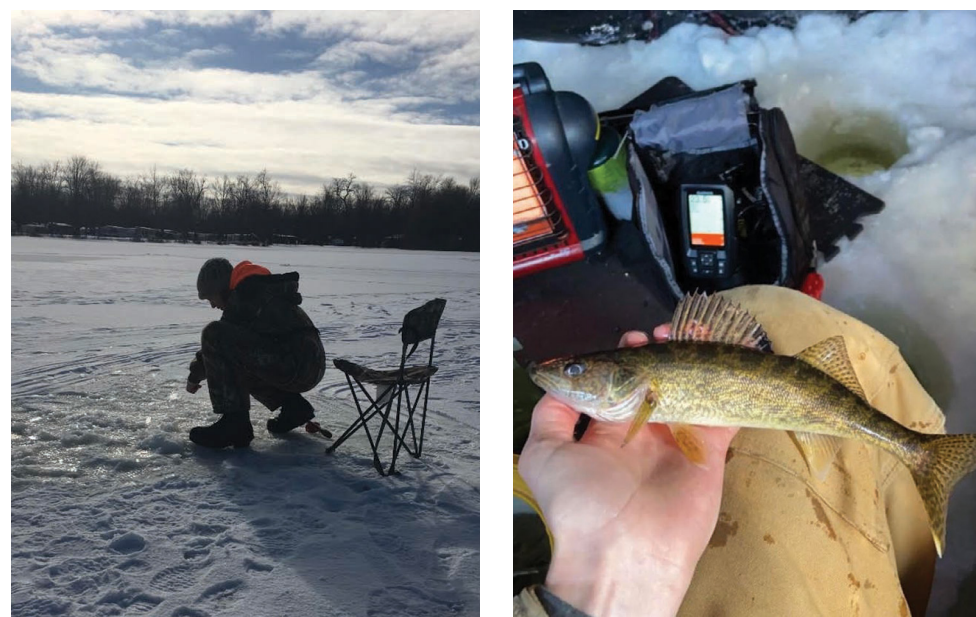
**ETHAN HALL**  
U-M student contributor

jackets off, play cards, cook warm meals, and enjoy the cozy atmosphere with close friends and family. Other gear you'll need are a comfortable seat, a short rod and reel with bait and, most importantly, warm clothes. Although experts are often found hauling enough gear to live off-the-grid for a month, the fundamentals to have a good time on the lake remain cheap and easily accessible. Around Ann Arbor, a trip to Shultz Outfitters could provide the essential gear and advice from expert anglers to get novices on their feet in no time.

In Michigan, we are fortunate to be one of the ice-fishing capitals of the world. Anglers pilgrimage yearly for lake trout in the Upper Peninsula, brown trout in Lake Michigan, and, closer to Ann Arbor, the massive Walleye in Lake Erie. If that drive is too far for Ann Arbor residents, Cavanaugh and Independence lakes are both within 30 minutes of the city. They are popular destinations for locals for good reason. Both are great places for beginners to catch their limits of less difficult perch and panfish (perfect for fish fries) with a chance to hook into the elusive, toothy Northern Pike.

Once you get on the water, if it's clear that you're a beginner who wants help, ice fishermen are notorious for being friendly. Just don't ask them where their favorite spots are! Rightfully, they can get protective over those sacred spaces.

At the end of the day, being on the hardwater is a metaphor for life itself: it's rarely successful, sometimes uncomfortable, but always beautiful. It's the pursuit that keeps us coming back, not the fish themselves, and that's what outsiders have never understood. Standing implausibly secure on water, often taking for granted the graceful, uncaring environment, it's an adventure that epitomizes the worthiness of the human experience.



**Top: Vexilar Flasher detects underwater fish movement. Left: Hall hand-lining a pike on the ice. Right: Holding a small walleye in a heated shack.** Photos submitted by Ethan Hall.

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## 26th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners back in person

**SARAH UNRATH**  
Groundcover contributor

The Prison Creative Arts Project presents the "26th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners," the largest exhibition in the world of its kind.

The free, public exhibition, which opens at 5 p.m. on March 22, highlights the work of 392 artists from 26 state correctional facilities in Michigan. It features 714 paintings, drawings and three-dimensional works.

After almost two years of not being able to meet the artists in person, PCAP staff and volunteers had strong reactions to reconnecting with them. "There was no greater joy I experienced this year than visiting artists in prison. Despite everything, PCAP artists have persevered and they continue to create works of great ingenuity, nuance, thoughtfulness and playfulness. I'm humbled by it," PCAP Director Nora Krinitsky stated.

Art selection trips to each facility are at the heart of the exhibition because this is when powerful dialog happens between artists and volunteers. "I learned a great deal about what

inspires their work, such as their family, passions outside of art, and the goals that they have set for themselves in the future," MSW graduate Emily Cole shared as she reflected on her experience.

The show features a diversity of both artists and artistic choices. Artists range in age from 18 to 80, men and women from across the state with diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Most pieces are offered for sale, with proceeds going directly to the artists. Last year, almost half of the 823 pieces were sold, generating \$28,945 in just two weeks. There is a broad array of artistic media and subject matter, including landscapes, portraits, prison scenes and political statements.

"Many artists chose to respond visually to many of the same topics that currently dominate the news and public discourse, including emotional and thoughtful reflections on isolation and COVID-19, on the American political landscape, and personal perspectives on race and the Black Lives Matter movement," curator Charlie Michaels observed.

Senior curator Janie Paul started the

*Annual Exhibition* in 1996 with her husband and PCAP founder Buzz Alexander. Paul, a community-based artist and University of Michigan professor emerita whose primary focus is the capacity of visual meaning-creation as a vehicle for social change, has been bringing art from prisons across the state to campus each year.

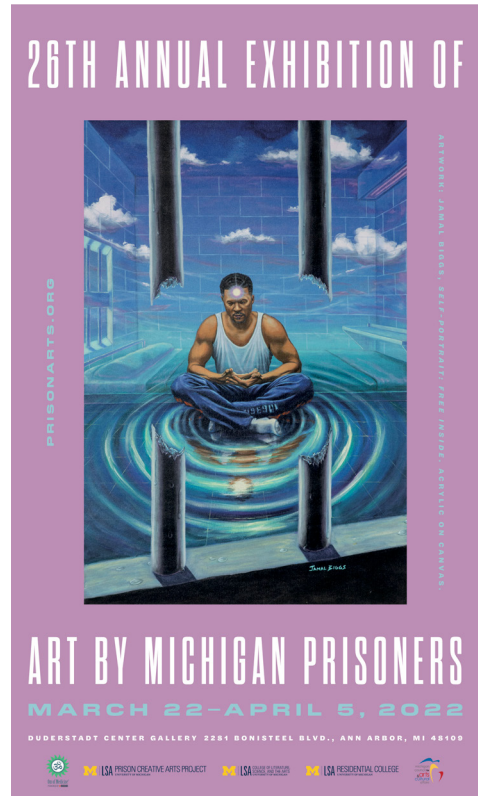
For the first show, Paul and Alexander traveled to 16 prisons in Michigan to collect art.

"We were just mind-blown by the work," Paul said. "We discovered it was such an important event both for the artists inside and for the community because it brought us all together."

The exhibition is on view at the Duderstadt Gallery, 2281 Bonisteel Blvd. on U-M's North Campus March 22-April 5. Gallery hours are noon-6 p.m. Sunday and Monday; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

The opening celebration program begins at 6:30 p.m. on March 22nd and features speakers from the University, the Michigan Department of Corrections and artists from previous exhibitions, and a performance by the U-M Out of the Blue choir.

The exhibition is supported by the

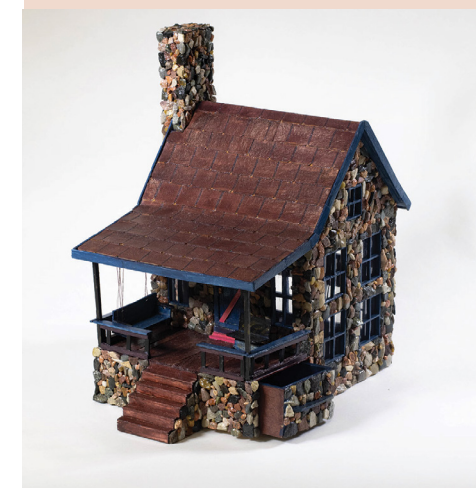


Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, U-M Residential College, U-M College of Literature, Science and the Arts, and Om of Medicine-Ann Arbor.

Artworks pictured below will be featured at this year's exhibition.



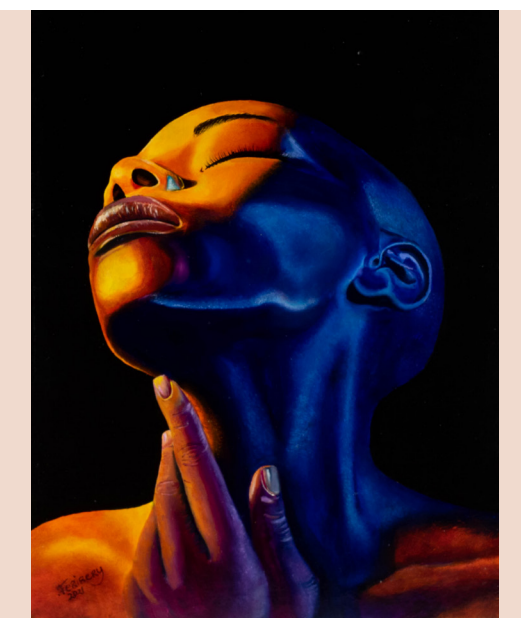
**Above: "Despair" by Doc Colli-son.** Oil.



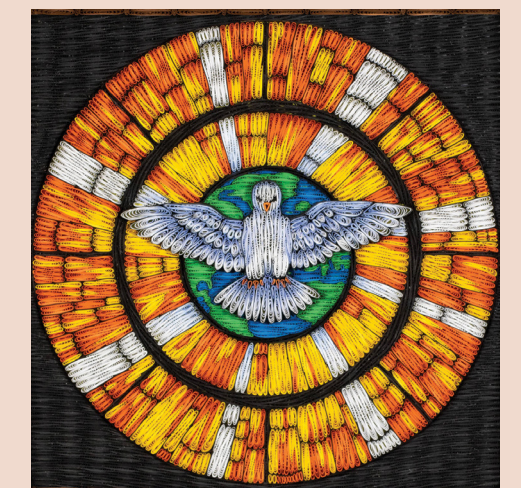
**Below: "Her Song" by Robert Fitzner.** Acrylic.



**Left: "Living off the grid in Montana" by Kimmy.** Mixed Media.



**Above: "Even in the dark, there's beauty" by Daniel Teribery.** Acrylic.



**Below: "At Our Wit's End" by Serge Thachenko.** Paint.



**Left: "War cry" by James Tinker.** Construction paper.



# Community group proposes non-police crisis response team

**MARLEY HORNEWER**  
**Ann Arbor Community Safety Coalition**

On April 5, 2021, the Ann Arbor City Council passed Resolution 21-0612. This resolution directed the City Administrator, John Fournier, to create a new public safety program to respond to mental health crises — for example, suicide threats — across Ann Arbor. The resolution specified that the response team’s workers should be unarmed, because “the presence of a holstered firearm may give rise to feelings of unease and intimidation, particularly among persons from BIPOC communities.”

Excited by the City’s efforts to promote public safety, a coalition of community members came together to offer input on the new program. They called themselves CROS (pronounced “crows”), which stands for Coalition for Re-envisioning Our Safety — and their efforts are ongoing today. Among CROS’ members are faith leaders, social workers/therapists, public health and healthcare workers, researchers, community builders and racial justice organizers.

CROS’ intention is clear: they want to ensure that the new public safety program is community-led and evidence-based. In particular, they want to ensure that the program takes into account the diverse interests of the community members it will serve and the increasing evidence that care-based — rather than violence-based — safety is the most effective way to protect communities, particularly over the long-term. Collectively, CROS members have articulated a shared analysis of public safety and crafted a proposal for the new unarmed response program.

Central to CROS’ shared analysis are these seven tenets:

1. There are expert non-police professionals who should be responding to certain types of emergencies, such as mental health crises.
2. “Public safety” means caring for the well-being of ALL people — no exceptions.
3. Police can cause significant harm to communities, even if individual police officers mean well.
4. Community members should inform and direct how their community responds to danger, and therefore should inform and direct the unarmed, non-police response to mental health crises.
5. The word “violence” describes harms perpetuated on various levels,

including the systemic level (such as hunger and homelessness) and the interpersonal level (such as emotional abuse between two individuals).

6. The expert non-police professionals who respond to crises must be independent from the criminal legal system, so as to avoid further entangling community members in cycles of incarceration.

7. Police, who were trained to address crises using violence, cannot be effectively re-trained to address crises using care-based methods.

Based on this shared analysis, and drawing from existing model programs across the country (including those in Eugene, Denver, Olympia, San Francisco, and Austin), CROS members have proposed that Ann Arbor’s new public safety program should include these six features:

1. Be politically supported and funded by the City government, but housed and managed within a separate organization or group whose mission aligns with the work.
  2. Follow a public health approach by ensuring separation from law enforcement and the legal system (no law enforcement included in response) as well as by expanding beyond solely mental health to issues of conflict, public assistance, transportation and more.
  3. Use a separate phone number, independent from 911, to give people who would avoid a 911 law enforcement response a place to call for help.
  4. A 2-year (minimum) funded pilot of the program that allows for quality design, implementation and evaluation.
  5. Select service providers through a process that is open and informed by community members and experts.
  6. Include direction and decisions from a governing board composed of community members and leaders.
- CROS members explain that their proposed program model is promising because it provides a comprehensive mechanism to connect the right resources to the right needs — for example, to connect a houseless person with shelter, food, water and health care, and to bring in trained, unarmed, trauma-informed de-escalators to settle interpersonal conflicts. As an added benefit, their proposed model won’t overtax or incorrectly use the Ann Arbor police department; instead, the program will make use of skilled community members like social workers — people who already know how to do this sort of crisis response work, and how to do so effectively.



**On February 16, CROS hosted an online public forum about building an unarmed police response, facilitated by Maria Thomas (top left). Speakers included Bri Carpenter (top right), Sheri Wander (top middle), Erin Keith (bottom left) and Yodit Mesfin Johnson (bottom right).**

CROS estimates that their proposed model’s annual budget would total \$3 million, which would fund 16 staff members (including crisis intervention workers, harm reduction specialists and paramedics), a separate call center, technical assistance, insurance and vehicles. As Molly Kleinman with Bend the Arc Jewish Action of Greater Ann Arbor points out, “\$3 million pales in comparison to the \$31 million AAPD budget, while getting us closer to a world where we approach people in crisis with care and connection, rather than guns and criminalization.”

A number of City officials, including the mayor, have expressed support for CROS’ proposed model. However, it remains to be seen whether the City Administrator and City Council will endorse the proposal, or whether they

will opt for a version of an unarmed response program that relies on increased policing. We expect the City Administrator to present a final plan, and for the City Council to vote on this plan, in April or May.

In the meantime, readers who support CROS’ proposed model make their voices heard. They can:

1. Sign CROS’ petition: [bit.ly/CROSpetition](https://bit.ly/CROSpetition)
  2. Share with CROS why an unarmed, non-police response program is important to them, and when (that is, in what sorts of situations) they might call the separate number: [bit.ly/sharewithCROS](https://bit.ly/sharewithCROS)
- Readers can also head to [bit.ly/CRO-Stakeaction](https://bit.ly/CRO-Stakeaction) to find more ways to show their support. (All bit.ly links in this article are case sensitive.)

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# A call for LGBT prioritization in US refugee admissions and resettlement policy

**SEAN ERRINWRIGHT**  
**Groundcover contributor**

*Trigger warning: sexual violence, homophobia, transphobia*

Evans first fell in love seven years ago, when he was 15. In his own words: “His name was Nosa. ... we got caught ... (my mother) had two men tie me up ... on the floor. And there, she hit me and left a mark on my stomach with a razor blade. She took a stick and broke it on me, and she kicked me. Now I have scars on my stomach. My mom did that. She put a knife in the fire and burned my stomach. I was screaming. She kept doing it. After that, she said I should get out, I’m not her son anymore. She doesn’t want to see me, doesn’t have anything to do with me. She is no longer my mother. I almost died.”

Evans comes from a Christian Pentecostal family in the city of Benin, Nigeria. “I was bleeding, I was in pain,” Evans continues. “I had bruises all over my body, but I was afraid to go to the hospital because I didn’t want anyone to know what had happened. So, I went to the Ring Road area in Benin and slept on the sidewalk.”

Evans slept in the street for four days. Several years later, on September 19, 2019, Evan and his boyfriend Charles started making love.

More than ten neighbors broke down their door and started hitting them with sticks and swords and kicked them for more than half an hour. Evans has scars on his buttocks, head and one of his legs as a result.

Someone cut him in the face with a knife; Evans now has a wide and shiny scar that curves from his left ear to his jaw from that.

Eventually, Evans was able to get away from the mob and hide, bleeding all over his face and body. Days later he heard the mob had beaten Charles to death.

The Nigerian police response was to send out a wanted poster of Evans all around the country.

Today, Evans lives in a refugee community in Serres, Greece, where he still does not feel safe, living in fear of disclosing his sexual identity to anyone. To learn about Evans’ whole refugee story, go to <https://www.arrowsmithpress.com/lgbtq-refugees>.

Let me also tell you about Benjamin, from Ghana, whose brother with AIDS was killed by poisoning, and who fled for his life when he started having AIDS symptoms.

Let me also talk about Karolina, a trans woman living with HIV. Karolina

fled to the U.S. to escape the health-care discrimination she faced in her home country of Mexico — just for not fitting into that culture’s traditional gender norms.

And then there are the Kyrgyz LGBT individuals who face so much discrimination in the workplace that they have to turn to sex work just to survive in Kyrgyzstan.

These are but a few examples of the many thousands of LGBT individuals who face the possibility of death and discrimination daily just for loving someone of the same sex.

And the violence they face daily is incomprehensible for many of us Americans. There are vigilante beatings, executions and torture — such as what Evans experienced — in Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon and Senegal. Governments in these countries either turn a blind eye or are complicit in the human rights violations of their LGBT citizens.

It is legal to kill LGBT people by stoning in Afghanistan, Brunei, Iran, Iraq, Mauritania, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Islamist militias murder LGBT Iraqis and Syrians, with ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) publicly announcing they killed 39 sodomy offenders.

ISIL published pictures they took while a young gay man, tied to a chair, was thrown off a building to his death. More pictures were circulated of a gay man bleeding to death after an ISIL stoning.

Syria’s Al-Nursa blackmail LGBT individuals caught having sex and kill them if they cannot pay. The Houthis in Yemen kill their LGBT compatriots, too.

Gay folks in the Sudan are murdered while trans people there are tortured.

The long arm of the Chechen secret police tracks down LGBT Chechens seeking asylum in other countries; if they are found, they are disappeared. In what they call “anti-gay purges,” Chechen authorities secretly abduct, imprison and torture LGBT individuals they are supposed to be protecting. 100 gay and bi men were held in “concentration camps” (also known as “torture camps”) in Chechnya and tortured — 3 died.

There are 72 countries on the face of this planet who criminalize love between consenting same-sex adults. The punishments include: involuntary psychiatric hospitalization, forced conversion therapy, blackmailing, physical and psychological abuse, corrective rape and sexual assault, public

shaming.

Because of all that, I’m advocating that our government prioritize LGBT refugees in our Refugee Admissions and Resettlement policies. Prioritizing LGBT refugees is how we as a nation can make a difference. LGBT refugees are not only experiencing simple depression; their mental health issues are far more profound. After enduring years and decades of hate crimes, stigmatization, prejudice and oppression, concealment, fear and terror, LGBT refugees develop Complex PTSD, also known as Complex Trauma. They experience intrusive memories, avoidance, hypervigilance, alteration in affect, impulsivity, severe dissociation, alterations in self-perception and, of course, difficulty relating to others.

And those are just trauma symptoms.

LGBT refugees experience internalized homophobia and self-hate and experience high rates of psychiatric morbidity. Suicide is often their only tool to cope with their hopelessness and despair.

We can help them.

When LGBT refugees are prioritized in immigration, they get the psychiatric care they need much more swiftly and urgently than they otherwise would.

In a world where we are one of a small number of countries willing and able to protect LGBT persons, we need to extend our arms out to the highly vulnerable, very traumatized LGBT refugees.

As we know, a country can give priority to one refugee over another. When there is a non-LGBT refugee and an LGBT refugee, when the country flexes its coercive power to admit only one of the two, that is when LGBT prioritization can come into play.

There are examples of precedence for this prioritization. In 1948, the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14, stated: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

In 1951, the UN Convention on Refugees stated in its very first Article: “A refugee is a person outside their country who has a well-founded fear of persecution owing to their ... membership of a particular social group.”

To help us figure out whether LGBTQ persons fall under the category of “a particular social group,” look back to 1994. At that time, Attorney General Janet Reno released Order 185-94, which stated the following: “An individual who has been

identified as homosexual and persecuted by his or her government for that reason alone may be eligible for relief under the refugee laws on the basis of persecution because of membership in a social group.”

Furthermore, in 2004, 2011, and 2012, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and the Council of the European Union published documents wherein they recognized the LGBT community as a social group.

This recognition acknowledged that their persecution is grounds for asylum. Meanwhile, closer to home: in 1990, the U.S. lawfully decreed “homosexuals” as a qualified refugee group.

In 2007, U.S. refugee law recognized transgender identity as a basis of asylum, accepting trans people as being collectively a social group.

In 2015 the Obama administration took the first steps toward prioritizing LGBT refugees. Due to ISIL’s horrific treatment of LGBT Syrians, Obama made LGBT Syrians, as a group, a priority for asylum.

Just a few years ago, in 2017, The Ninth Circuit Court recognized that LGBT individuals, persecuted by their family and neighbors due to their sexual orientation, had the right to claim that persecution as grounds for asylum.

We have over 70 years of historical groundwork paving the way for us to prioritize LGBT refugees in the U.S. refugee resettlement process. A refugee policy that includes the prioritization of LGBT refugees will make the difference in many thousands of refugees’ lives, refugees who have shown up at our borders after experiencing truly unimaginable and inconceivable torment and agony simply because of who they love.

Today, contact your Congressional representatives to let them know that you want to make ending LGBT refugee anguish a priority. Tell them that you demand a reform in our Refugee Admissions and Resettlement policies that prioritizes LGBT refugees so that we can become a global leader in refugee human rights.

*Sean Errinwright is a member of the LGBT community and is a Global Social Work graduate student at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. Sean is a Board Member of U-M’s Queer Advocacy Coalition, and he interns at Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County’s Refugee Services Department where he assists Afghani refugees to resettle in the Ann Arbor area.*







# Ballin' on a budget: Delicious Italian\* pasta situation

**CHRIS FIELDS**  
Groundcover contributor

This meal is great for many reasons. It will knock your socks off and taste like you spent a million dollars at your local Italian establishment. If you're in a hurry, you can pull it together in less than 30 minutes (especially if you already have some leftover protein in the fridge). Perhaps most importantly, it is highly customizable. Nearly all of the ingredients except the olive oil, garlic and pasta are optional. You can do whatever you want with this recipe because you are in charge. In this sense, it is not a recipe so much as it is a technique. It will be the perfect meal to impress a special someone in your life. It may even change the trajectory of your life.

I would like to give a special shoutout to Chef John from Food Wishes for teaching me everything I know about cooking and for instilling the techniques outlined in this recipe. I love you Chef John.

## Ingredients:

2 to 8 oz of your favorite pasta  
2 to 10 cloves of garlic  
Enough olive oil to cover the bottom of the pan  
Salt and/or pepper to taste  
A dash of red pepper flakes  
2 to 4 glugs of cheap white wine. Not cooking wine  
4 to 8 oz of a protein of your choice (shrimp, chicken, tofu, etc.)  
Juice from half to one whole lemon + zest  
Small handful of basil and/or Italian parsley, coarsely chopped  
Coarsely chopped mushrooms and onions, as many as you want, if you dare  
Hard cheese of your choice (Pecorino or Parmesan works well), as much as you want, grated  
A hearty knob of butter, or 3 glugs of heavy cream

*\*This is not an authentic Italian recipe. Many Italian chefs would scoff at the amount of flavors in this recipe. That's okay, you're cooking this for you. Not them.*

You may notice that this "recipe" is very bad at telling you exactly which and how much of an ingredient to use. This is intentional. Rather than follow a rigid set of instructions, the purpose of this ambiguity is to get you in the kitchen experimenting with flavors and ingredients until you can decide what

you like for yourself. This is how you learn to cook, rather than simply follow directions.

## Directions:

1. Prepare your *mise en place* (French for "get all your ingredients prepped and portioned because it's going to come together fast"). Chop your vegetables, juice and zest your lemon, and portion your proteins/pasta/wine/etc.

2. All of the vegetables should be chopped however you please and the garlic should be thinly sliced, not minced.

3. Cook your protein if you are using any. This meal is best suited for a light protein such as chicken or seafood (Aldi's has cheap shrimp), but you are the boss of your sauce so cook whatever you like to eat.

4. If you are cooking a land animal, season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover pan with a bit of oil and heat over medium high heat. Once hot, sear your protein and flip after a few minutes. Turn heat down to medium. Once cooked through, remove from pan.

5. Pour a small amount of olive oil in the pan and sauté onions and mushrooms if you are using any. Cook at least until soft and slightly browned.

6. Add chopped garlic and pepper flakes, continue to cook over medium low heat until just golden. Be careful to not take the garlic too far, it is better to undercook it than overcook.

7. Pour in your white wine (chicken stock works too, or both) to stop the garlic cooking process and scrape the delicious browned bits from the bottom of the pan. This is called deglazing. It will make you look very fancy. Make sure your date is watching if you have one. The delicious browned flavor bits stuck to the pan are called fond.

8. Cook to reduce the liquid by 2/3 while stirring occasionally.

9. At this point you should boil your pasta in a separate pot. Remember to salt your water and strain the pasta when it is al dente, or just shy of being tender. Reserve a cup or two of the pasta water and set the pasta aside.

10. Add in your lemon juice and reduce just a bit further. Taste the sauce that is forming in your pan and adjust however you think is necessary. Add some salt, maybe some pepper, whatever you think it needs. Trust your intuition. This is you cooking.

11. Add the pasta water and stir your sauce until everything is nicely combined and emulsified. If you are using heavy cream, add this instead of

pasta water and reduce until sauce slightly thickens.

12. Add your pasta, cheese and protein then toss until everything in the pan gets to know each other. Heat over low heat until the sauce is your preferred consistency.

13. Finally, stir in your preferred herbs, lemon zest, and a knob of butter (if using instead of cream). Taste once more and adjust accordingly. Train

your tongue. Perhaps some more salt? Maybe a squeeze of lemon? A dash of cayenne?

Plate your delicious Italian pasta situation and marvel in what you've created. You did this. Great job. You will never go to Olive Garden again. You've also impressed whomever you are sharing this meal with. Maybe you're eating alone? That's okay, you did this for you because you deserve it.

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